IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend the specification as follows:

At page 2 of the original application, before the first full paragraph on page 2 corresponding to paragraph [0001] of the published application, please insert the following new paragraph [001a] and headings, and amend paragraph [0001] as follows:

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[001a] This application is a 371 of international application number PCT/EP2004/006884, filed on June 25, 2004.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The invention relates to a method of operating a strip casting machine for producing a metal strip, ~~according to the preamble of claim 1~~

At page 2 of the original application, the second full paragraph on page 2 corresponding to paragraph [0002] of the published application, please insert the following heading and amend paragraph [0002] as follows:

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE RELATED ART

[0002] From, e.g., WO-A-01/23122 it is known to place or to press, with a predetermined force, lateral seals, which are provided with sealing plates, against end surfaces of casting rolls during an entire duration of a casting operation for limiting a casting gap between the casting rolls in order to insure the necessary tightness. A monitoring and regulating system provides for a precise bearing of the sealing plates against the end surfaces of the casting rolls and for a continuous regulation of the placement pressure. Known ~~are~~ strip casting ~~machine in~~ machines operate by which lateral seals, in addition, are displaced in a horizontal or vertical direction or oscillate to prevent a non-uniform wear of the sealing plates. However, with this type of the sealing plate adjustment, a high wear of both the sealing plates and the roll end surfaces cannot be prevented, which limit the casting time and increases the costs of the process because of high costs of the sealing plates and big output losses.

At page 2 of the original application, before the third full paragraph on page 2 corresponding to paragraph [0003] of the published application, please insert the following heading:

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0003] An object of the invention is to provide a process of the type described above which would permit a noticeable wear reduction.

At page 3 of the original application, the first full paragraph on page 3 corresponding to paragraph [0004] of the published application, please amend the paragraph as follows:

[0004] According to the invention, this object is achieved with a process having features of ~~claim 1~~ operating a strip casting machine produces a metal strip, during which molten metal is continuously poured between two casting rolls that form a casting gap. Lateral seals having sealing plates laterally delimit the casting gap, in which the sealing plates are placed or pressed with a preset placement or pressing force against the end surfaces of the casting rolls. The magnitude of the placement or pressing force can be set. The sealing plates are placed by repeated intermittent steps with a preset force and time against the end surfaces of the casting rolls and are held in the placing position for a preset time. This enables a distinct reduction in the wear of the sealing plates and of the casting roll end surfaces.

At page 3 of the original application, the third full paragraph on page 3 corresponding to paragraph [0006] of the published application, please amend the paragraph as follows:

[0006] With the inventive method, according to which the sealing plates are placed in repeatable ~~go-and-stop~~ intermittent steps with a predetermined force and within a predetermined time against the end surfaces of the casting rolls, and are held in the stop position for a predetermined time, the wear of the sealing plates and the end surfaces of the casting rolls is noticeably reduced.

At page 4 of the original application, before the first full paragraph on page 4 corresponding to paragraph [0009] of the published application, please add the following heading as follows:

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] The invention will be described in detail below with reference to the drawings.

At page 4 of the original application, the fourth paragraph on page 4 corresponding to paragraph [0012] of the published application, please amend the paragraph, and add a heading and a new paragraph [012a] as follows:

[0012] FIG. 2 a cross-sectional view along line II-II in FIG. 1.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[012a] The present invention is related to international application number PCT/EP2004/006884, filed on June 25, 2004, which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

At page 7 of the original application, the first full paragraph on page 7 corresponding to paragraph [0018] of the published application, please amend the paragraph as follows:

[0018] The sealing plate 11 is formed, preferably, of a inexpensive material that can be a graphite-containing carbon material or a mixture of SiO_2, Al_2O_3, zirconium oxide, graphite, similar to that the pouring spout are formed of. The sealing side 11a is coated with a material having good sliding and abrasive characteristics such as, e.g., boron nitride, ~~SiACOH~~ SiAlON or abradables used as a sealing material in gas turbine. The coating is effected by application. The thickness of the layer amounts to from 0.1 to 2 mm. The sealing side 11a is coated with the same material over its entire surface. However, a different coating can be provided in the wettable region, e.g., having a low wetability with good isolation properties and wear characteristics.

At pages 8-9 of the original application, the first full paragraph on page 8 to the first full paragraph on page 9, corresponding to paragraphs [0020] to [0022] of the published application, please amend the paragraphs as follows:

[0020] The above-mentioned adjustment ~~device 13~~ mechanism, which provides for a three-dimensional displacement of the side seal 10 upon placement or pressing of the respective sealing plate 11, provides for a very precise placement against end surfaces of the casting rolls 1, 2 even in heated operational condition, whereby the wear becomes as small as possible.

[0021] In order to be able to reduce this wear even further, it is proposed, according to the invention, to not retain constant the placement pressure during the following casting operation after grinding, during casting, of the sealing plate 11 which takes place as a result of the sealing plate 11 being pressed with a predetermined force against the end surfaces of the casting rolls 1, 2, i.e., the sealing plates 11 are not continuously placed but the placement is carried out with an intermittent process, also known as a so-called "stop-and-go" process, in repeatable ~~"stop-and-go"~~ intermittent steps, whereas for a predetermined duration, a holding time, the position of the sealing plates is kept unchanged before again the placement with a predetermined force for a predetermined time takes place. Both the placement force and the holding time can be varied. Those are adapted to the sealing behavior of the sealing plates 11.

[0022] During the casting phase, the sealing plates 11 firstly are pressed, for a relatively short time, against the end surfaces of the casting rolls 1, 2 and then, with the release of the press-on force, are held in a position before the ~~"stop-and-to"~~ intermittent placement of the sealing plates is undertaken.